

## Book Review

### Current Therapy of Infectious Disease, 2nd edn.

Senior Editor, David Schlossberg

Mosby 2000. ISBN 0323009077. 792 pages, illustrated, £95

The current publication is the second edition of a highly successful textbook on infectious diseases that was first published in 1996. As stated in the preface by the senior editor, the primary focus of this textbook is to 'bridge the gap' between large encyclopedic texts on infectious diseases and microbiology and small pocket-sized treatment manuals for clinical infectious diseases. The second edition has updated chapters and numerous new chapters relating to such topics as hantavirus infections, bioterrorism, drug-drug interactions, and other new topics of infectious diseases that have emerged within the past five years. I took upon the task of reviewing this textbook with some trepidation, as I had expected a rather dry and bland treatment of current therapy in infectious diseases. I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the textbook in general and its practical utility for the busy clinician tasked with the responsibility of caring for patients with infectious diseases. It is worth noting that a textbook of this nature will receive increasing competition from computer-based software programs that contain similar information for handheld devices. These PDAs are fast becoming co-dominant fixtures in the pockets of house officers, and now compete for space with stethoscopes and patient information cards in the house officer's white coat.

Careful examination of Schlossberg's 'Current Therapy of Infectious Diseases' reveals a thoughtfully prepared and well-edited medical textbook. There are 319 contributors to this volume. The author list runs the gamut from junior faculty members and private practice clinicians to prominent academicians in the field of infectious diseases. The authors are primarily but not exclusively from North America. There are 88 illustrations and numerous tables, graphs and figures that supplement the text. Despite the numerous contributing authors, the chapters are remarkably consistent in format and style. This is a true credit to the editorial staff of this textbook. The chapters are brief and focused on the topic at hand. Most chapters are 3–4 pages long and are followed by a small number of suggested references rather than an exhaustive reference list, which is typically seen in large comprehensive textbooks of infectious diseases.

The book is focused on clinical evaluation and treatment guidelines. The basic topics of microbiology, genetics, immunology, pathophysiology, and pharmacodynamics are largely bypassed in this textbook. Information on these topics can be found in standard textbooks of infectious diseases. The chapters are divided primarily

by types of infectious organisms and clinical syndromes, rather than dealing extensively with the nuances of antimicrobial therapy. The textbook uses tables to illustrate points in the text in a liberal fashion. The tables are easy to read and are highly informative. The illustrations are in black and white, which detracts somewhat from their quality, but undoubtedly helps to reduce the cost of the textbook. Many of the chapters are a joy to read and are reminiscent of a skilled infectious disease consultant's report. The chapters are generally succinct, up to date, and focused on the specific treatment management for each major infectious disease syndrome.

In many respects, the textbook may serve as a reference book for general internists and family practitioners rather than for infectious diseases practitioners. House staff members and even fellows in infectious diseases might find this textbook a valuable quick reference for current treatment strategies. Clinicians and clinical investigators may find it useful as a brief review of treatment guidelines for symptoms not often seen on a daily basis by seasoned infectious disease clinicians.

As is often the case with a textbook of this nature, there are predictable criticisms. The material presented is quite up to date, but does not include the most recent innovations in infectious disease therapy, such as activated protein C for the treatment of severe sepsis, caspofungin to treat aspergillosis, or lopinavir as a new protease inhibitor for HIV. This reader would have preferred a more extensive index and perhaps a more detailed discussion of pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics in special-risk populations, such as pregnant women and dialysis patients. Color prints of skin lesions would be desirable, although the black and white images in this text are generally quite readable.

In summary, I found this textbook to be well suited for its stated purpose. The book provides clinically useful information in a succinct fashion, and is easily readable and readily understood. Readers interested in a detailed discussion of epidemiology, basic microbiology and pathophysiology should seek this information in other reference textbooks of infectious diseases. The book is reasonably priced, and I suspect that most readers will be pleased with their purchase.

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